Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 12 Number 7 July 2015

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 26th July 2015: Shamshabad Airport. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 5.30AM.

On the kind invitation of the authorities at Shamshabad Airport, we will be visiting the green environs surrounding the Airport premises for a birding tour, after a long interval of seven years - the last BSAP birding trip to Shamshabad was in 2008. As then, this time too promises to be a fruitful and satisfying outing. This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms. Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

INDOOR MEETING: Talk by Mr P Janardhan Reddy on "Antarctica - the White Continent".
Tuesday, 7th July 2015, 6.30PM: Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

The Talk will include a brief history of the exploration of Antartica, followed by a photo presentation and a discussion on penguins, seals, whales, landscapes and the impact of climate change on Antartica.

The speaker Mr P Janardhan Reddy is an avid wild life photographer based in Hyderabad. His interests include environmental issues and wild life.

HISTORICAL BIRDING

Trip Report - Qutb Shahi Tombs, 17th May 2015

Humayun Taher

Indian Peafowl (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

When this trip was first announced, I was extremely pleased to think that this ancient (in more ways than one) venue was once more being recognized. In early days of the BSAP, this was a very popular destination for the fledgling society and its equally juvenile members. The sightings used to be of a high order. Subsequently, much to my disappointment, this place sort of dropped off the radar and, except for occasional visits by the members of the photographic clubs around the city, very little ornithological advancement happened in this area.

Now, the Qutb Shahi Tombs, sometimes erroneously known as the "Seven Tombs" (believe me, there are more than 7 in this complex) are in the process of being 'restored' by the Archaeological Society of India; some philanthropic organizations are also facilitating the work. One of our members, who works with these organizations, very kindly obtained permission for us to visit this place, and so the trip was announced.

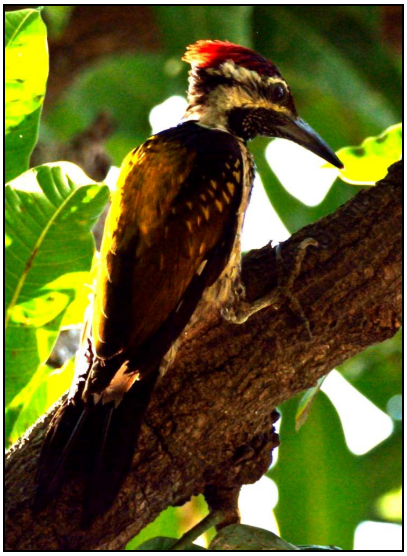
Since the venue was new to most members, and also very much within the city limits, perhaps it is not really surprising that the turnout was overwhelming, to say the least. This, I think, is certainly one of the few occasions in a long time, when the list of attendees has been quite as long as the list of sightings. Close to 50 members turned out for this trip.

The energetic ministrations of Shafaatsaab and Surekha having got the motley collection of birders into some semblance of order, we trooped into the imperial complex; exclaiming at the beauty and grace of these examples of the architecture of a bygone era. The exquisite carvings in the mud-brick walls of the soaring minarets and domes are as clear-cut as filigree work. The old-time decorators obviously knew their work. While exclaiming over a particularly delicate piece of work adorning a minaret, I found myself plagued with a nagging doubt that the minaret was not quite in sync with its twin - an unsightly bulge on the tip was missing on the one behind. With the sun in our face, we strove to penetrate this mystery of the dissimilar twins and finally the answer was forthcoming… when the sharp eyes of some of our younger members figured out that the bulge was nothing more than a Shikra sitting composedly on the top of the minaret and pretending that it is an old-time ornament. Certainly, the eyes were bright enough to resemble lapis lazuli!

On some of the tombs the ancient plaster is cracking and flaking away. While this is very unfortunate from the point of view of the archaeologist, it has compensations from the ornithologist's point of view. These flaked-away parts are favourite resting places of the little Spotted Owlets that flit all around the complex in the nights. We saw a pair sitting in one of these niches in the flaking walls; periodically one or the other (and occasionally both) would pop their heads out to see if the twitchers were still there or had moved on., The clown-like antics of Spotted Owlets are most endearing; I never tire of watching them doing their best to hide, but failing dismally through their own all-consuming curiosity, wanting to know exactly what is going on in the world around them.

Pied Bushchat (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

Continuing on our way, some of the members dawdled behind while the rest of the group bustled on ahead. Lagging behind has one advantage - the birds disturbed by the group ahead generally tend to retreat behind the group, so the rearguard has a good opportunity to see these. We saw Coppersmith Barbets calling from all around us, and a large fig tree in the vicinity was obviously the local club, where all the barbets were gathering for the feast. A solitary Golden-backed Woodpecker (all right… Black-rumped Flameback then..!) perched on a stout tree. It was obviously nesting there, as we saw it poking its head into the hole and tapping away as though smoothing down the roughness of the nest walls. I anticipate interesting developments here in the very near future.



Black-rumped Flameback
(Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

The larger group had, by this time, reached the gardens surrounding the tomb of Muhammed Quli Qutb Shah. This, the largest of the tombs in the imperial complex here, is flanked by large trees, in the top branches of which we saw a male Plum-headed Parakeet and a pair of Red-vented Bulbuls.

Plum-headed Parakeet
(Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

The Parakeet seemed to be in moult, or a juvenile. The rich maroon colour of its head was somewhat faded, and its tail too was not so long or so bright blue; I was inclined to believe that it could be a juvenile bird, probably bred in one of the many nooks and crannies in the crumbling stucco plaster covering the tombs. Certainly both these and the commoner Rose-ringed Parakeet were seen many times, perching on the tops of the tombs and frequently crawling into the holes in the walls and even on the dome itself.

Rose-ringed Parakeet & Black-rumped Flameback
(Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

Grey Francolin and Indian Peafowl are extremely vocal in the mornings. I think once the main group of visitors start to arrive, these shy creatures would quickly disappear into the scrub that is still surviving in some of the areas around the tombs.

But what we all found most interesting is the excellent work being done in the restoration process. Conscious of the delicate filigree work on the tombs, and also of the original construction, the current team of restorers are doing excellent work, using the same mud, lime and straw mix that the ancients used to make the plaster with which the tombs are adorned. The paint too is being carefully selected to protect the monuments. I sincerely hope that these efforts continue and that the ancient imperial complex can once again become a thing of great beauty and serenity.

Musings such as these helped to pass the time. We were now in a small walled garden, with a deep well and some nondescript, unmarked graves scattered about, shaded by many lofty trees. Close by, the restorers have also planted many small saplings of indigenous trees such as neem, acacia and tamarind. We saw several species of woodland birds here, like the White-browed Bulbul, Oriental Magpie Robin, Purple Sunbirds, Pale-billed Flowerpecker and Common Tailorbird. Large Grey Babblers were vocally indignant at being disturbed in this secluded place just as they were starting their foraging.

Pale-billed Flowerpecker (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

Rufous Treepie (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

Rufous Treepies and Common Mynas were just as vocal, if slightly less harsh in their strictures. A pair of Dusky Crag Martins skimmed past, so close that the white spots on each feather of their fanned-out tails were clearly visible. Other unseen feathered denizens were twittering all around us, not all identifiable but all equally welcome to the ears. There is music, to those who would listen, in the most prosaic of nature's announcements!

Brahminy Starling (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

But time waits for no one. The day was heating up, and not all the members were accoutered to beat the summer. Accordingly, the return was announced and, pausing only to take a couple of group photographs, with the background, of course, of the beautiful and imposing mausoleum of Sultan Quli Qutb ul Mulk, we retreated to where cold water, hot *chai* and welcome snacks awaited. And with a final tally of 44 species of birds, I had to conclude that this was one occasion where the number of members attending the jamboree considerably exceeded the number of bird species seen. Not that I could hear any complaints, mind you!

Black Drongo (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

The final list of species sighted is given below:

	Status	Species	Scientific name	Name as per eBird (Common Names translated to English(India))	Common Names - Old (As per Ali & Ripley in Pictorial Guide)
1	R	Little Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax niger*	Little Cormorant	*Little Cormorant*
2	R	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*	Eastern/Western Cattle Egret	*Cattle Egret*
3	R	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*	Glossy Ibis	*Glossy Ibis*
4	R	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Spot-billed Duck*
5	R	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	Black Kite	*Pariah Kite*
6	R	Indian Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	Shikra	*Shikra*
7	R	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	Grey Francolin	*Grey Partridge*
8	R	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	Indian Peafowl	*Common Peafowl*
9	R	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Red-wattled Lapwing*
10	R	Rock Dove	*Columba livia intermedia*	Rock Pigeon (Blue Rock Pigeon)	*Blue Rock Pigeon*
11	R	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	Laughing Dove (Little Brown Dove)	*Little Brown or Senegal Dove*
12	R	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	Spotted Dove	*Spotted Dove*
13	R	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Rose-ringed Parakeet*
14	R	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Psittacula cyanocephala*	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Blossom-headed Parakeet*
15	R	Southern Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	Greater Coucal	*Crow-Pheasant or Coucal*
16	R	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopacea*	Asian Koel	*Koel*
17	R	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*	Spotted Owlet	*Spotted Owlet*
18	R	Asian Palm-swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	Asian Palm-Swift	*Palm Swift*
19	R	Little Swift	*Apus affinis*	Little Swift (Indian House Swift)	*House Swift*
20	R	White-breasted Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	White-throated Kingfisher	*White-breasted Kingfisher*
21	R	Little Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	Green Bee-eater	*Green Bee-eater*
22	R	Coppersmith Barbet	*Megalaima haemacephala*	Coppersmith Barbet	*Crimson-breasted Barbet, Coppersmith*
23	R	Black-rumped Flameback	*Dinopium benghalense*	Black-rumped Flameback	*Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker*
24	R	Dusky Crag-martin	*Ptyonoprogne concolor*	Dusky Crag-Martin	*Dusky Crag Martin*
25	R,M	Red-rumped Swallow	*Hirundo daurica*	Red-rumped Swallow	*Striated or Red-rumped Swallow*
26	R	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	Red-vented Bulbul	*Red-vented Bulbul*
27	R	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*	White-browed Bulbul	*White-browed Bulbul*
28	R	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*	Common Iora	*Common Iora*

29	R	Oriental Magpie-Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	Oriental Magpie-Robin	*Magpie-Robin or Dhyal*
30	R	Indian Black Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus fulicatus*	Indian Robin	*Indian Robin*
31	R	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata bicolor*	Pied Bushchat	*Pied Bush Chat*
32	R	Large Grey Babbler	*Turdoides malcolmi*	Large Grey Babbler	*Large Grey Babbler*
33	R	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*	Yellow-billed Babbler	*White-headed Babbler*
34	R	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*	Ashy Prinia	*Ashy Wren-Warbler*
35	R	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	Common Tailorbird	*Tailor Bird*
36	R	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Tickell's Flowerpecker*
37	R	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*	Purple Sunbird	*Purple Sunbird*
38	R	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*	Indian Silverbill (White-throated Munia)	*Common Silverbill or White-throated Munia*
39	R	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	House Sparrow	*House Sparrow*
40	R	Brahminy Starling	*Temenuchus pagodarum*	Brahminy Starling	*Black-headed or Brahminy Myna*
41	R	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	Common Myna	*Common Myna*
42	R	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	Black Drongo	*Black Drongo or King Crow*
43	R	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	Rufous Treepie	*Indian Tree Pie*
44	R	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	House Crow	*House Crow*

Photo: Hemant Kumar

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A SALUTE TO OUR ANCESTOR

Report – Indoor Meeting, 7th April 2015

Surekha Aitabathula

A domineering physique and presence, he looks like an approaching mountain. Powerful shoulders lead to a sloping plank-like back that gives him his signature posture. He knuckle-walks on his massive, hyper-hirsute forelegs, making you say "Ouch! that must hurt." His dome-shaped head adds inches to his height. He has small, deep-set eyes below a protective helmet-like forehead, with constantly-blinking eyelids. A protruding jaw and flared nostrils open to the sky make him look ruthless. A wrinkly face makes him look like an old man. When closed, his mouth is just a slit, but when open wide, trust me, you will get paralysed with fear. Please welcome centre stage, the magnificent Gorilla.

During our indoor meetings, we have listened to talks on various creatures of the earth, like the Birds, the Dinosaurs, the Tigers, the Fishing Cats, etc, but Gorillas were making an entry, so to speak, for the first time. No wonder then, that about fifty of us descended upon the German Centre to listen to the well-travelled Nikil Rangadas's talk on Gorillas.

The talk was titled 'GORILLAS IN THE MIST', which was originally the title of a book penned by Dian Fossey, who studied Gorillas for over two decades. Fossey's murder at Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda in 1985 remains unsolved till date. The book was later adapted into a movie starring Sigourney Weaver.

We waited with excitement for the curtains to rise on the talk by Nikil Rangadas of the happy disposition and free and spontaneous narration. He kept us engaged right through, and shared several interesting facts and insights about this primate.

Gorilla is the largest living primate, with its DNA quite similar to that of humans (depending on what is counted). The closest relatives of the Gorilla are the intelligent chimp and the super-intelligent human.

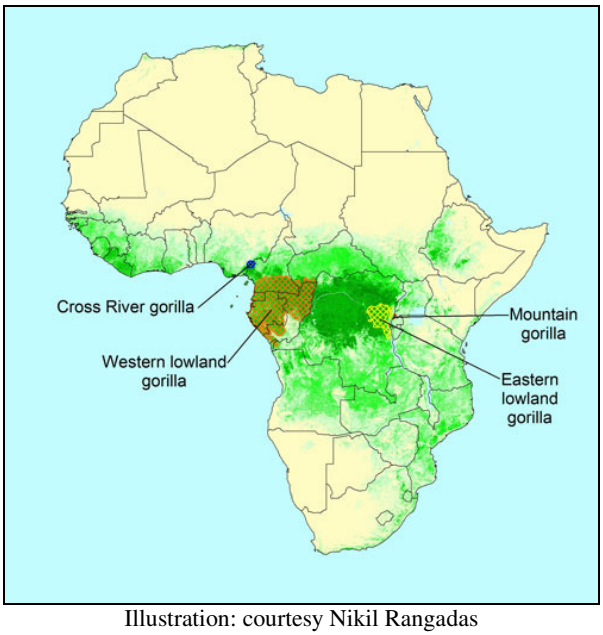

Illustration: courtesy Nikil Rangadas

The Mountain Gorilla inhabits the Albertine Rift Montane cloud forests of Virunga Volcanoes in Rwanda, ranging in altitude from 2200-4300 metres. Lowland Gorillas live in dense forests and lowland swamps and marshes at sea level. Western Lowland Gorillas live in Central West African countries, and Eastern Lowland Gorillas live in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Eastern is darker than the Western, with the Mountain Gorilla being the darkest of all.

Gorillas may walk bipedally when they are carrying food or in defensive situations. An adult male weighs around 180 kg, while the female weighs around 110 kg. The male is up to 5 ft 9 inches tall, with an arm-span stretching to 8.5 ft. Females have shorter arm-spans.

Adult male Gorillas are known as Silverbacks due to the characteristic silver hair on their backs reaching to their hips. The Gorilla's facial structure is described as *mandibular prognanthism*, i.e. the mandible protrudes further out than the maxilla.

Gorillas nest on the ground unlike Chimps and Orangutans.

Vocal communication among gorillas is important in within-group interactions as well as extra-group interactions. Within-group calls include "copulatory grunts" by adults; "whines", "whimpers" and "play chuckles" by infants; "intense" and "mild cough grunts" during mild threat displays; "close" calls that include both "syllabled" and "non-syllabled" calls such as "train-grunts" and "dog whines" (Fossey 1972; Harcourt et al. 1993).

"Close" calls are commonly given within the group, in situations of either potential separation or potential conflict. Extra-group calls serve to alert group members of potential predation and include "barks"; they are also given as long-distance threat displays upon detection of another group, and include the "hoot series," which may be accompanied by chest beating. Most calling occurs within groups during feeding times, though Gorillas do call during rest periods as well.

Nikil's presentation had some really interesting pictures, taken by him in several 'Gorilla countries' in the dark continent. A look at the pictures told us how amazingly similar we are to the Gorillas in our body language - the sitting, the reclining, the stretching, the baby holding, and the grooming behaviour - the only gesture we seemed to have stopped emulating is probably the fiendish chest thumping!

A word about the speaker. A very enthusiastic speaker, Nikil Rangadas kept us enthralled throughout, as he led us on a journey into the lives of Gorillas just as he saw it. His love for the wild shone through loud and clear. He came across as someone full of life, joy and mirth as he walked us through the dos and don'ts to be followed while Gorilla watching. The Q&A session threw up a number of questions, which included such gems like "Why did he run away when the Gorillas chased him?"

Nikil Rangadas retained his conspicuous love for the Gorillas, his knowledge and sense of humour while ably fielding every kind of question, and gave us a thoroughly enjoyable session.

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Bird of the Month

Text and photos: Umesh Mani

Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)

Greater Flamingo Adult (L) and Sub-adult (R) (Pulicat, 27-12-2014)

Order: Phoenicopteriformes
Family: Phoenicopteridae
Genus: *Phoenicopterus*
Species: *P. roseus*
Size: 110-150 cm

Description &distribution: The Greater Flamingo is the largest of the flamingos, averaging 110-150 cm in height, with the tallest recorded individual standing 187 cm tall. It is closely related to the American Flamingo and the Chilean Flamingo, with whom it was earlier considered conspecific. Its plumage is predominantly pinkish-white; the wing coverts are deep reddish-pink, and primary and secondary flight feathers are black. The long, thin neck and legs are pink, eyes are yellow, and the bill is pink with a black tip. Females are smaller than the males. Sub-adult birds are whitish-grey or greyish-brown, with legs and beak mainly brown. They have some pink in the underparts, wings and tail, but attain the proper pink plumage only several years into their adult life. The pink colouration comes from the beta carotene and other beta carotenoid pigments present in the brine shrimp, and the red and blue-green algae, which form a major part of the flamingos' diet.

The Greater Flamingo is distinguished from the Lesser Flamingo by its larger size, paler plumage, lighter bill, and pink (rather than red) legs.

The Greater Flamingo is distributed across Africa, southern Europe, the Middle East, and parts of southern and south-western Asia. Northern populations migrate to warmer regions in winter, and sometimes even stay through the summer.

Behaviour: The Greater Flamingo prefers relatively shallow water bodies, including salt pans, saline lagoons, estuaries, and large saline or alkaline lakes. It uses freshwater inlets for drinking or bathing, but otherwise does not inhabit them.

The diet predominantly consists of brine shrimp, along with insects and their larvae, crustaceans, molluscs, worms, crabs, various microscopic organisms and, sometimes, small fish. They also take plant material, including grass seeds and shoots, decaying leaves, and algae. They feed by stirring up the water with their feet as they walk along slowly, using the tongue to 'pump' water through its specialized bill, which has rows of comb-like plates that filter out the organisms it wants to retain. The upper jaw is movable and not rigidly fixed to the skull, which allows it to feed with its head down.

The call is a goose-like, honking *ka-haunk*.

Nesting: The breeding season of the Greater Flamingo varies from place to place, but is usually after the rains. It is a highly social species, nesting in large, dense colonies, often numbering up to 20,000 pairs. The group courtship display is spectacular, and involves synchronised wing-raising, ritualised preening, and 'head-flagging' (raising the neck and beak, and turning the head from side to side). The clutch consists of a single chalky-white egg, which it lays on a mound of hardened mud, or on sandbanks, open beaches, or sandy or rocky islands.

Local name: The Greater Flamingo is known as *'raaj hans'* in Hindi, *'raja hamsa'*, *'pu konga'* or *'samudrapu chiluka'* in Telugu, and *'poonaarai'* or *'kizhi mookku naarai'* in Tamil.

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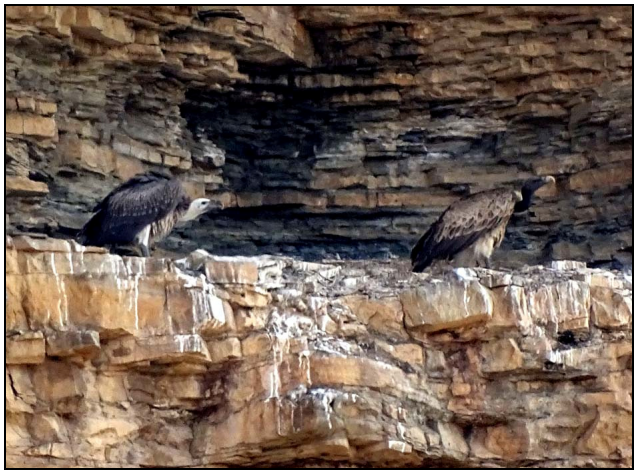
THE RETURN OF THE SCAVENGER

Text: Surekha Aitabathula; Photos: Harpal Singh



Long-billed Vulture juvenile (L) and adult (R)

A story on the sighting of the Long-billed Vulture in Bejjur, written by a reputed senior journalist who just happened to be a classmate of mine from my time at the Department of Journalism in Osmania University, inspired us (Lawrence, Amrutha, Sagarika, Vinay and self) to take off to Adilabad District.

As we drove up, I felt simultaneously sad and proud to learn that the one and only vulture colony in Telangana or Andhra Pradesh, exists in Adilabad District.

How true is the adage that the journey is always more enjoyable (thanks to the anticipatory quotient) than the destination! That said, let me amend the adage a little, and say that the destination this time beat the drive hollow - though the latter was full of laughter, fun and food!

Well, you see, the destination was all the more thrilling, because we got to see the early steps of the return of the scavenger bird, which was almost given up as extinct from our state.

Reaching Mancheriyal at dusk after a fairly long drive, we decided to spend the night there. The next day, before the crack of dawn, we were on our way towards Bejjur. We were met at Sirpur Kagaznagar by our good old friend and classmate, and Special Correspondent with The Hindu based in Adilabad, Harpal Singh - whose car was loaded with fruit baskets for us, large enough to feed half the population of Adilabad!

Together we reached the office of the Forest Range Officer, and were treated to a sumptuous breakfast. The very proactive FRO, Mr M Rammohan Rao's jurisdiction covers Bejjur range. He informed us that he used to notice vultures gliding overhead and thus began tracking them, and chanced upon them nesting on the high cliff next to the Peddavagu stream in the Bejjur forest in 2013. After some initial research, he wrote to the Ministry of Forests and Environment and got research funds sanctioned to set up a small team of young researchers/observers/trackers. This salaried team now observes the vultures daily, keeps bird count, and notes down behaviour and other relevant data.

Mr Rammohan Rao informed us that, with the intention of emulating the successful concept of 'vulture restaurants' in Pinjore, Haryana, he had set up a table on top of the cliff, where he had started leaving large chunks of goat meat for the vultures; however, they were yet to touch the meat till date. When I raised the question of the vultures' reluctance to land or feed on the meat, with some bird experts, I learnt that the cause has remained inconclusive. One school of thought said that the ground-feeding vulture most probably is unable to recognise the meat placed atop the table as food, as it is used to seeing a whole carcass on the ground. Another school of thought was that the vultures in Pinjore and Chamorshi in Maharashtra seemed to comfortably feed on meat placed on a two-feet-high platform. Did the Pinjore vultures adapt, and are the Bejjur vultures taking time to follow suit? We don't know yet. Perhaps the answer lies in regular, keen observation and further research.

Anyway, reaching Bejjur, we trekked towards the cliff, crossed a gurgling stream and reached a high vantage point facing the cliff, from where we could see five chicks sitting outside their respective nests. For two-month-olds, the chicks looked quite tall and well-built. They sat very still, occasionally bending their long, bare necks; at times they looked like bent old men. But they still looked quite beautiful, with greyish-white feathers ruffling in the wind. They were so well-camouflaged on the rocky cliff that they were quite difficult to see. There were several nests, and the best indicator of their presence were the droppings that had whitened the cliff.

Patient they looked, sitting absolutely still for long durations - the vulture is a patient bird! Smilingly I recalled that this was the title of a James Hadley Chase novel I had read as a teenager. It is said that the vulture waits patiently near an injured and dying animal, but does not touch it till it breathes its last - no matter how long it takes. Only then does the vulture move in to scavenge. The vulture does not kill; it just eats the killed.

It is not very difficult to describe the vulture because of its massive size and distinctive shape, thick, bald head and neck, and huge hooked beak that promises to neatly tear every piece of meat off the bone.

In flight, its wingspan looks formidably large - enough to have unsettled and struck fear into the hearts of many an injured and therefore immobile animal.

Sad to note that this powerful creature is also the most vulnerable today, and rapidly dwindling in numbers. The reasons for decline of the vulture are various:

1. Vultures are essentially high perchers, and we have brought down most of our tall trees.
2. The unavailability of carcass - animals that are old and infirm are now taken straight to the slaughterhouse, thereby depriving the vulture of its food.
3. Most vultures are known to lay only a single egg. In the bleak scenario of lack of carcass on the landscape, the parents have to travel very long distances in search of food for the chick. The chick has to be left unguarded and vulnerable for long periods of time, thereby increasing their mortality rate. The vulnerability is all the more because vultures inhabit open country, usually roosting on the cliff or tall trees, or on the ground.
4. Diclofenac is said to be another reason for the declining numbers, and is now banned for veterinary use in India. If diclofenac was the main vulture decimator, then shouldn't the vulture count increase due to the banning of this drug? One wonders.

A clear and present danger, consequent to the disappearance of the vultures, is that rats and wild dogs have taken their place; these newly abundant scavengers, however, are not as efficient as vultures. The vulture's metabolism is a true 'dead-end' for pathogens, but dogs and rats become carriers of the pathogens.

We could go on delineating more and more causes and consequences of the decline of vultures, but the need of the hour is to put our best efforts into bringing back the big, the beautiful and the patient scavenger. Thankfully, given various conservation efforts, it is staging a comeback of sorts, and it is to be hoped that they return to abundance soon.

The team with Mr Rammohan Rao, FRO

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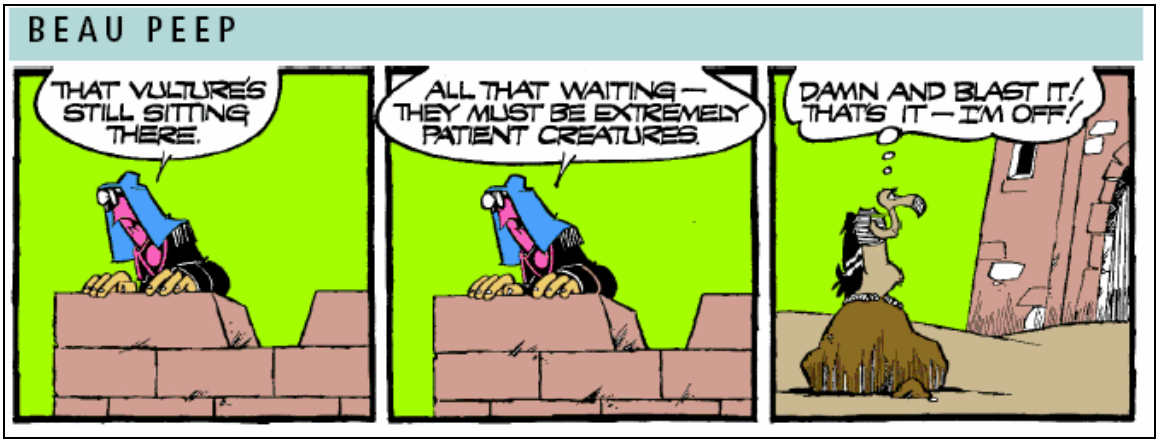
Bird Humour


BEAU PEEP
THAT VULTURE'S STILL SITTING THERE.
ALL THAT WAITING — THEY MUST BE EXTREMELY PATIENT CREATURES.
DAMN AND BLAST IT! THAT'S IT — I'M OFF!

(From Times of India, 02-04-2014)

For Private Circulation Only
Editors: Shanti Mani, Umesh Mani **Email:** bsap.pitta@gmail.com

For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*